

REMARKS

In the non-final office action mailed June 27, 2007, claims 1-51 were pending. Claims 1-6, 17-19, 21 and 23-25 stand rejected. Claims 7-16 and 26-51 are allowed and claims 20 and 22 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but are indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 1, 20, 21 and 22 have been amended in this response. Reconsideration of the present application as amended and in view of the remarks that follow is respectfully requested.

The priority claim on page 1 of the specification has been amended to reflect the issued status of the parent application.

In this response, claim 20 has been rewritten in independent form and is allowable as indicated in the Office Action.

Claims 1-6, 17, 21, and 23-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 2,693,795 to Grieshaber in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,380,999 to Healy. Additionally, claims 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Grieshaber in view of Healy, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,139,493 to Koros et al. Amended claim 1 recites, in combination with the other features recited therein, said first retractor portion and said second retractor portion each include an engagement member extending laterally therefrom for engagement by said separation instrument; one of said engagement members of said first retractor portion and said retractor second portion includes at least one alignment member extending toward said engagement member of the other of said first retractor portion and said second retractor portion; and said engagement member of the other of said first retractor portion and said second retractor portion includes at least one receptacle for receiving said at least one alignment member." The combination of Grieshaber and Healy fails to disclose or suggest at least these features in claim 1, and claim 1 is believed allowable.

Claim 21 has been amended to maintain consistency with the amendments made to claim 1. Claim 22 has been amended to recite the features associated with the hook portion that have been deleted from claim 1.

The present application is believed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the present application as amended and including claims 1-51 is respectfully requested.

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A notice of allowance is hereby solicited. The examiner is welcome to contact the undersigned to resolve any outstanding issues with regard to the present application.

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